

## THE DAILY PUBLIC LEDGER

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## THE INITIATIVE IN MARRIAGE.

About this time of year the newspapers abound in Leap Year jokes. One would imagine a general epidemic of so-called "popping the question" in the feminine world. Whether anything of the kind exists further than invitations to attend Leap Year dances and other functions may well be questioned.

The old tradition that the initiative in marriage must be taken by the male sex is one of the most striking curiosities of every day custom. It would not be easy to explain it fully. No doubt there are isolated cases where it is boldly ignored without regard to the calendar by women of resolute purpose. But as a whole it is deeply ingrained in the female mind.

In no other department of life's activities is the initiative so closely confined to one side. As between the buyers and sellers of merchandise, it is held to be legitimate for either one to take the first step without prejudice to his position. Also it is equally appropriate for the person who is employed to seek a position, and for the employer to seek some one to fill it.

It is hardly likely that the masculine mind imposed any such law. Women have no doubt instinctively felt that to be attractive they must exhibit a certain coyness. "Familiarity breeds contempt" and "absence makes the heart grow fonder" are two maxims that have deeply impressed the female mind. A woman may be deeply in love but she keenly realizes that she must not hold herself too cheap. She must somehow give the impression that she is elusive and hard to capture if she would stimulate interest.

Of course the old rule is rather technical. A woman has a thousand silent ways of asking the fateful question with her eyes, while the man is lamely halting and hesitating. The old tradition may give the man a sense of power, but it is an illusory one.

## OUR HOMES AND OUR PEOPLE.

The home life of this community is an indication of the character and makeup of the people who constitute the community.

Of course, you will find exceptions to every rule of life, but it is an indisputable fact that the home life of this town and country side is one of the brightest spots in our existence.

We have been in a majority of the local homes, and in almost every case we have found a spirit of happiness, contentment and thrift prevailing seven days in the week. We have found amicable relations existing between the heads of families; we have found strong indications of filial respect and devotion on the part of children for their parents; we have found a spirit of love and comradeship existing one toward another.

It speaks in volumes for the homes, the people, and the community. It indicates that we have a people who are above the average in intelligence, moving in an atmosphere that elevates instead of degrades.

In the business house and the offices, in the factories and in the shops, we find a consistent desire to be fairminded and just in the commercial affairs of the day. That craving to "skin the other fellow" so prevalent in some communities is happily absent here. Our people are moving steadily and persistently and consistently onward and upward and to better things and to a greater future.

Such is the spirit of this community as we find it in our daily rounds. It is a condition of which we are proud, of which every citizen should be proud.

It is the mirror which reflects the inner life of our homes and our people.

## SOME BUSINESS.

According to statistical figures furnished by the Department of Commerce, the United States did some foreign business last December. The total imports into this country were \$171,832,505, while the exports were \$359,306,492. Of these exports millions of dollars worth of horses and mules were shipped across the water.

These figures look large, but think of it! Most of the material exported included guns and ammunition to be used in killing off men of other nations. When the war ceases there will be some falling off in exports. The men will not be there to use the goods.

## Stingaree

By E. W. HORNUNG,  
Author of "Raffles"Motion Pictures by  
Kalem CompanyRead the Story and  
Then See the Pictures

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A BUSHRANGER AT BAY.

(Continued from Monday.)

And he peered rather pathetically through his glass.

"Didn't the same apply to the magazine you were reading?"

"No; I have always read the papers when I could," said Stingaree, and suddenly he was smiling. "That's one reason why I make a specialty of sticking up the mail," he explained.

Mr. Kentish was not to be drawn into a second deliverance on the bushranger's career. "Is it a good number?" he asked, nodding toward the magazine.

The bushranger picked it up.

"Good enough for me."

"What date?"

"Ninth of December."

"Nearly three months ago. I was in London then," remarked Kentish in a reflective tone.

"Really?" cried Stingaree, under his breath. His voice was as soft as the other's, but there was suppressed interest in his manner. His dark eyes were only less bright than the red glare that he took from his teeth as he spoke. And he held it like a connoisseur, between finger and thumb, for all his reputed palate.

"I was," repeated Kentish. "I didn't sail till the middle of the month."

"To think you were in town till nearly Christmas!" and Stingaree gazed enviously. "It must be hard to realize," he added in some haste.

"Other things," replied Kentish, "are harder."

"I gather from a cartoon that the new law courts are in use at last."

"I was at the opening."

"Then you may have seen this opera that I have been reading about?"

Kentish asked what it was, although he knew.

"Iolanthe."

"Rather. I was there the first night."

"The deuce you were!" cried Stingaree, and for the next quarter of an hour this armed scoundrel, the terror of a district as large as England and Wales, talked of nothing else to the man whom he was about to blind to a tree. Was the new opera equal to its predecessors? Which were the best numbers? Did Punch do it justice, or was there some jealousy in that rival hotel of wit and wisdom?

"Unfortunately," Guy Kentish had no ear for music, but he made a clear report of the plot, could repeat some of the lord chancellor's quips, and was in decided disagreement with the capricious banter from which he was given more than one extract. And in default of one of the new airs Stingaree rounded off the subject by dropping once more into—

For he might have been a Roachian,  
A French or Turk or Prooshian  
Or perhaps I-tai-tan,  
Or perhaps I-tai-tan!  
But in spite of all temptations  
To belong to other nations  
He remains an Englishman!

"I understand that might be said of both of us," remarked Kentish, looking the outlaw boldly in the eyes. "But from all accounts I should have thought you were out here before the days of Gilbert and Sullivan."

"So I was," replied Stingaree without frown or hesitation. "But you may also have heard that I am fond of music—any I can get. My only opportunities, as a rule," the bushranger continued, smiling mischievously at his cigar, "occur on the stations I have occasion to visit from time to time. On one good lady played and sang 'Pinafore' and 'The Pirates of Penzance' to me from dewy eve to dawn. I'm bound to say I sang some of it at sight myself, and I flatter myself it helped to pass an embarrassing night rather pleasantly for all concerned. We had all hands on the place for our audience, and when I left I was formally presented with both scores, for I had simply called for horses, and horses were all I took. Only the other day I had the luck to confiscate a musical box which plays selections from 'The Pirates.' I ought to have had it with me in my swag."

So affable and even charming was the quiet voice, so evident the appreciation of the last touch of the cigar which had thawed a frozen palate and so conceivable a further softening that Guy Kentish made bolder than before. He knew what he meant to do. He knew how he meant to do it. And yet it seemed just possible there might be a gentler way.

"You don't always take things, I believe?" he hazarded.

"You mean after sticking up?"

"Yes."

"Generally, I fear; it's the 'whole meaning of the act,' confessed Stingaree, still the dandy in tone and phrase. "But there have been exceptions," he added.

"Exactly?" queried Kentish. "And there's going to be another this afternoon?"

Stingaree buried the stump of his cigar into the scrub, and without a word the villain was back again, with his hard eyes, his harder mouth, his sinister scowl, his craze of a chin.

"So you come back to that?" he cried harshly. "I thought you had more sense. You will make me tie you up before your time."

"You may do exactly what you like,"

retorted Kentish, a galling scorn in his unaltered voice. "Only, before you do it, you may as well know who I am."

"My good sir, do you suppose I care who you are?" asked Stingaree, with an angry laugh—and his anger is the rarest thing in all his annals.

"I am quite sure you don't," responded Kentish. "But you may as well know my name, even though you never heard it before." And he gave it with a touch of triumph, not for one moment to be confounded with natural pride.

The bushranger stared him steadily in the eyes; his hand had dropped once more upon the butt of his revolver. "No, I never did hear it before," he said.

"I'm not surprised," replied the other. "I was a new member when you were turned out of the club." Stingaree's hand closed; his eyes were terrible. "And yet," continued Kentish, "the moment I saw you at close quarters in the road I recognized you as—"

"Stingaree!" cried the bushranger, on a rich and vibrant note. "Let the other name pass your lips—even here—and it's the last word that ever will!"

"Very well," said Mr. Kentish, with his unaffected shrug. "But, you see, I know all about you."

"You're the only man who does in all Australia!" exclaimed the outlaw hoarsely.

"At present! I shan't be the only man long."

"You will," said Stingaree, as he leaned over, revolver in hand. "You'll be the only man ever, because instead of tying you up I'm going to shoot you."

Kentish threw up his head in sharp contempt.

"What?" said he. "Sitting?"

Stingaree sprang to his feet in a fury. "No; I have a brace!" he cried, catching the pack horse. "You shall have the other, if it makes you happy, but you'll be a dead man all the same. I can handle these things, and I shall shoot to kill!"

"Then it's all up with you," said Kentish, rising slowly in his turn.

"All up with me?" "What the devil do you mean?"

"Unless I am at a certain place by a certain time, with or without these letters that are not yours, another letter will be opened."

Stingaree's stare gradually changed into a smile.

"A little vague," said he. "don't you think?"

"It shall be as plain as you please. The letter I mean was scribbled on the coach before I got down. It will only be opened if I don't return. It contains the name you can't bear to hear!"

There was a pause. The afternoon sun was sinking with southern pre-eminence, and Kentish had got his back to it by cool intent. He studied the play of suppressed mortification and strenuous philosophy in the swarthy face warmed by the reddening light and admired the arduous triumph of judgment over instinct, even as a certain admiration dawned through the monochrome which intensely focused his attention.

"And suppose," said Stingaree—"suppose you return empty as you came?"



"You will," said Stingaree as he leaned over, revolver in hand.

A contemptuous kick sent a pack of letters spinning.

"I should feel under no obligation to keep your secret."

"And you think I would trust you to keep it otherwise?"

"If I gave you my word," said Kentish, "I know you would."

Stingaree made no immediate answer, but he gazed in the sun flayed face without suspicion.

"You wouldn't give me your word," he said at last.

"Oh, yes, I would."

"That you would die without letting that name pass your lips?"

"Unless I die delicious—with all my heart. I have as much respect for it as you."

"As much!" echoed the bushranger in a strange blend of bitterness and obligation. "But how could you explain the bags? How could you have taken them from me?"

Kentish shrugged once more.

"You left them, I found them. Or you were sleeping, but I was un-armed."

"You would be like that—to save my name?"

"And a man whom I remember perfectly?"

Stingaree heard no more; he was down on his knees, collecting the letters into heap, and shoveling them into the bags.

"You can't carry them," said he when none remained outside. "I'll take them for you and dump them on the track."

"I have to pass the time till midnight. I can manage them in two journeys."

But Stingaree insisted, and presently

stood ready to mount his mare.

"You give me your word, Kentish?"

"My word of honor."

"It is something to have one to give! I shan't not come back this way. We shall have the Clear Corner police on our tracks by moonlight, and the more they have to choose from the better. So I must go. You have given me your word. You wouldn't care to give me?"

But his hand went out a little as he spoke, and Kentish's met it seven-eighths of the way.

"Give this up, man! It's a poor game, when all's said. Do give it up!"



Question Followed Question, Compliment Capped Compliment.

urged the man of the world with the warmth of a lad. "Come back to England and—"

But the hand he had detained was wrenched from his, and in the pink sunset sifted through the pines, Stingaree vaulted into his saddle with an oath.

"With a price on my skin!" he cried, and galloped from the gully with a bitter laugh.

And in the moonlight sure enough came bobbing horsemen, with fluttering pugarees and short tunics with silver buttons, but they saw nothing of the missing passenger, who had carried the bags some distance down the road, and had found them quite a comfortable couch in a certain box commanding a sufficient view of the road. Nevertheless, when the little coach came swaying on its leather springs, its scarlet enamel stained black as ink in the moonshine, he was on the spot to stop it with uplifted arms.

"Don't shoot!" he cried. "I'm the passenger you put down this afternoon." And the driver nearly tumbled from his perch.

"What about my mail bags?" he recovered himself enough to ask, for it was perfectly plain that the pretentiously intrepid passenger had been skulking all day in the scrub, scared by the terrors of the road.

"They're in that clump," replied Mr. Kentish. "And you can get them yourself or send some one else for them, for I've carried them far enough."

"That be blown for a yarn!" cried the driver, forgetting his benefits in the virtuous indignation of the moment.

"I don't wonder at your thinking it one," returned the other mildly, "for I never had such absolute luck in all my life."

And he went on to amplify his first lie like a man.

Meanwhile a great crowd gathered about Kentish. He seemed like a man from another world. There were so many questions hurled at him that at first he refused point blank to answer any of them. There was a movement on the part of the crowd to carry him on their shoulders, which he quickly checked. He actually had to fight his way through the crowd. The crowd, finally noting his evident embarrassment, fell back.

But when the bags were really back in the coach, piled roof high on those of the downward mail, then it was worse fun for Guy Kentish outside than even he had anticipated. Question followed question, compliment capped compliment, and a certain unsteady undercurrent of incredulity by no means lessened his embarrassment.

Had he but told the truth he felt he could have borne the praise, and indeed enjoyed it, for he had done far better than anybody was likely to suppose, and already it was irritating to have to keep that circumstance a secret. Yet one thing he was able to say from his seat before the coach drew up at the next stage.

"You should have a spell here," the driver had suggested, "and let me pick you up again on my way back. You'd soon lay hands on the bird himself, if you can put salt on his tail as you've done. And no one else can. We want a few more chums like you."

"I dare say!"

And the new chum's tone bore its own significance.

"You don't mean," cried the driver, "to go and tell me you'll hurry home after this?"

"Only by the first steamer," said Guy Kentish.

And he kept that word as well.

(The End.)

This episode of "Stingaree" will be shown at the Washington Theater in the near future. Watch for date.

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